

Amendment
Serial No.: 09/708,309

IN THE CLAIMS

Please cancel Claims 16 and 17, without prejudice.

Please add new Claim 18.

With entry of this amendment, the claims of the present application are as shown below.

1. (Currently Amended) A floatation swimsuit comprising:
 - a form-fitting torso covering, said form-fitting torso covering including a retaining pocket, a right arm covering, a left arm covering, a left leg covering, and a right leg covering;
 - a unitary floatation element for retention by said retaining pocket, said unitary floatation element including:
 - a backsheet comprising a layer of buoyant material having a thickness within a first predetermined range for providing general buoyancy to a wearer, said backsheet including an inner surface for presentation toward a wearer and an outer surface for presentation away from a wearer; and
 - a plurality of raised portions integrally carried by said backsheet in fixed relative positions for providing enhanced buoyancy to strategically selected areas of the wearer's body, each of said raised portions comprising a buoyant material having a thickness substantially greater than that of said backsheet and each of said raised portions extending outwardly from said outer surface of said backsheet;
 - wherein said inner surface of said backsheet includes at least one flexion channel for increasing flexibility, **and wherein said unitary floatation element flexes differently in opposite directions due to the varying thickness between said backsheet and said raised portions on one side of said buoyant material and said flexion channel on the other side of said buoyant material.**

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2. (Original) The floatation swimsuit of Claim 1, wherein said retaining pocket includes a sheet of fabric, said sheet of fabric being laminated to the outwardly disposed surface of said unitary floatation element to ensure that said fabric sheet closely matches the contours of said backsheet and enhanced buoyancy regions of said unitary floatation element.

4. (Original) The floatation swimsuit of Claim 1, wherein said plurality of raised portions include an upper torso portion and a lower torso portion.

5. (Currently Amended) A unitary floatation element for use in a floatation swimsuit, said floatation element comprising:

a backsheet contained within a torso covering including a right arm covering, a left arm covering, a left leg covering, and a right leg covering, said backsheet comprising a layer of buoyant material having a thickness within a first predetermined range for providing general buoyancy to a wearer, said backsheet including an inner surface for presentation toward a wearer and an outer surface for presentation away from a wearer;

a plurality of raised portions integrally carried by said backsheet in fixed relative positions for providing enhanced buoyancy to strategically selected areas of the wearer's body, each of said raised portions comprising a buoyant material having a thickness substantially greater than that of said backsheet and each of said raised portions extending outwardly from said outer surface of said backsheet;

wherein said inner surface of said backsheet includes at least one flexion channel for increasing flexibility, **and wherein said unitary floatation element flexes differently in opposite directions due to the varying thickness between said backsheet and said raised portions on one side of said buoyant material and said flexion channel on the other side of said buoyant material, wherein the flexibility of said floatation swimsuit is enhanced while continuing to be form-fitting.**

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6. (Original) The floatation swimsuit of Claim 5, wherein said plurality of raised portions include an upper torso portion and a lower torso portion.

7. (Currently Amended) A floatation swimsuit comprising:

a form-fitting torso covering including a right arm covering, a left arm covering, a left leg covering, and a right leg covering, said form-fitting torso covering including a distributed layer of buoyant material distributed substantially throughout for providing general buoyancy to the wearer, said distributed layer of buoyant material having a thickness in a first particular range; and

a plurality of enhanced buoyancy regions integrally carried by said distributed layer of buoyant material in fixed positions for providing enhanced buoyancy to strategically selected areas of the wearer's body, each of said enhanced buoyancy regions comprising a buoyant material having a thickness substantially greater than that of said distributed layer of buoyant material and extending outwardly therefrom;

wherein said buoyant material includes flexion channels for increasing flexibility, ~~said flexion channels for presentation inward toward a wearer~~ and wherein said buoyant material includes a plurality of said flexion channels on one side and at least one of said flexion channels does not correspond with portions of said buoyant material between said plurality of enhanced buoyancy regions extending outwardly from another side of said buoyant material.

8. (Previously Amended) The floatation swimsuit of Claim 7, wherein said plurality of enhanced buoyancy regions include an upper torso portion and a lower torso portion.

9. (Original) The floatation swimsuit of claim 7, further comprising a fastenable torso opening.

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10. (Original) The floatation swimsuit of claim 9, wherein said fastenable torso opening includes a fastenable chest opening.

11. (Original) The floatation swimsuit of claim 9, wherein said fastenable torso opening includes a fastenable back opening.

12. (Original) The floatation swimsuit of claim 9, where said fastenable torso opening includes a fastener selected from the group consisting of a zipper, a hook and loop fastener, a button, a snap, a tie, and a strap.

13. (Currently Amended) A method of manufacturing a floatation swimsuit comprising the steps of:

providing a form-fitting torso covering having an element retaining pocket, a right arm covering, a left arm covering, a left leg covering, and a right leg covering;

providing a unitary floatation element having a backsheet comprising a layer of buoyant material having a thickness within a first predetermined range and a plurality of raised portions integrally carried by said backsheet for providing enhanced buoyancy to strategically selected areas of the wearer's body, said unitary floatation element further comprising at least one flexion channel for presentation toward the swimsuit wearer;

positioning said unitary floatation element at a desired location adjacent said form-fitting torso covering; ~~and~~

securing said unitary floatation element within said element retaining pocket; and

flexing said unitary floatation element differently in opposite directions due to the varying thickness between said backsheet and said raised portions on one side of said buoyant material and said flexion channel on the other side of said buoyant material.

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14. (Currently Amended) A floatation swimsuit comprising:
a form-fitting torso covering, said form-fitting torso covering including a retaining pocket;

a unitary floatation element for retention by said retaining pocket, said unitary floatation element including:

a backsheet comprising a layer of buoyant material having a thickness within a first predetermined range for providing general buoyancy to a wearer, said backsheet including an inner surface for presentation toward a wearer and an outer surface for presentation away from a wearer, said backsheet further comprising at least one flexion channel on said inner surface for providing flexibility; and

a plurality of raised portions integrally carried by said backsheet in fixed relative positions for providing enhanced buoyancy to strategically selected areas of the wearer's body, each of said raised portions comprising a buoyant material having a thickness substantially greater than that of said backsheet and each of said raised portions extending outwardly from said outer surface of said backsheet;

wherein plurality of raised portions include an upper torso portion and a lower torso portion and said retaining pocket includes a sheet of fabric, said sheet of fabric being laminated to the outwardly disposed surface of said unitary floatation element to ensure that said fabric sheet closely matches the contours of said backsheet and enhanced buoyancy regions of said unitary floatation element, and

wherein said unitary floatation element flexes differently in opposite directions due to the varying thickness between said backsheet and said raised portions on one side of said buoyant material and said flexion channel on the other side of said buoyant material, wherein the flexibility of said floatation swimsuit is enhanced while continuing to be form-fitting.

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15. (Allowed) A floatation swimsuit comprising:

a form-fitting torso covering, said form-fitting torso covering including a retaining pocket;

a unitary floatation element for retention by said retaining pocket, said unitary floatation element including:

a backsheet comprising a layer of buoyant material having a thickness within a first predetermined range for providing general buoyancy to a wearer, said backsheet including an inner surface for presentation toward a wearer and an outer surface for presentation away from a wearer; and

a plurality of raised portions integrally carried by said backsheet in fixed relative positions for providing enhanced buoyancy to strategically selected areas of the wearer's body, each of said raised portions comprising a buoyant material having a thickness substantially greater than that of said backsheet and each of said raised portions extending outwardly from said outer surface of said backsheet;

wherein said retaining pocket includes a sheet of fabric having an indicator dye which bleaches upon exposure to the elements to notify the wearer of degradation of the swimsuit components.

Claims 16-17 (Canceled).

18. (New) A floatation swimsuit comprising:

a form-fitting torso covering including a right arm covering, a left arm covering, a left leg covering, and a right leg covering, said form-fitting torso covering including a distributed layer of buoyant material distributed substantially throughout for providing general buoyancy to the wearer, said distributed layer of buoyant material having a thickness in a first particular range; and

a plurality of enhanced buoyancy regions integrally carried by said distributed layer of buoyant material in fixed positions for providing enhanced buoyancy to

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strategically selected areas of the wearer's body, each of said enhanced buoyancy regions comprising a buoyant material having a thickness substantially greater than that of said distributed layer of buoyant material and extending outwardly therefrom;

wherein said buoyant material includes flexion channels for increasing flexibility, said flexion channels for presentation inward toward a wearer and said unitary floatation element flexes differently in opposite directions due to the varying thickness between said backsheet and said enhanced buoyancy regions on one side of said buoyant material and said flexion channels on the other side of said buoyant material, and wherein the flexibility of said floatation swimsuit is enhanced while continuing to be form-fitting.